

Proud Grandma Goelet's Amazing Family Tug-of-War



Mrs. Robert Goelet, Formerly Princess Riabouchinsky, in a Fetching Gymnasium Costume.



Peculiar Social Problems Caused by Her Reported Disinheritance of Her Son and Her Self-Exile

from America Because of His Second Marriage

LONDON, Sept. 3.

THERE were three marriages of American millionaires comparatively recently which aroused much discussion in the States and abroad because of the social upheavals and family ill-feeling caused by them. The first of these was the marriage of Robert Goelet, son of the immensely fashionable Mrs. Ogden Goelet and brother of the Duchess of Roxburghe, to the Princess Riabouchinsky, the daughter of a poor Italian professor and divorced wife of a not well-known Russian noble. The second was that of Peter Cooper Hewitt, the distinguished American inventor, to fascinating Mrs. Brugiere. And the third was the mating of the well-known yachtsman and immensely wealthy Alexander Smith Cochrane to Mme. Ganna Walska, a Polish prima donna, with several husbands in the background and a record of defeated operatic ambitions.

Each of these men took, in his later years, a mate from an entirely different stratum of society than that in which they themselves had been cast. The death of Peter Cooper Hewitt on the verge of what gossip declared to be separation from his wife and the reported separation of Mr. Cochrane from his prima donna have directed attention to the course of the romance between Mr. Goelet and his charming lady.

This interest has been keenly sharpened by what can be called, at least, a semi-official announcement that the elder Mrs. Goelet intends to spend the balance of her days with the Duke and Duchess of Roxburghe, and will not again return to America unless it be for a necessary and brief business visit.

At the same time it has leaked out that Mrs. Goelet has made a will in which she entirely disinherits the son who has so displeased her, and has left her huge fortune, approximating seventy-five millions of dollars, in trust to her grandsons, Ogden and Peter Goelet, the children of her son's first wife, the former Elsie Whelen, of Philadelphia, and now Mrs. Clews, and her other grandson, who will inherit the title and estates of Roxburghe.

The son of Robert Goelet and his second wife, although equally the grandson of Mrs. Goelet, receives nothing.

The situation in the Goelet romance, so far as Grandma Goelet is concerned, may be likened to a tug-of-war, in which not only her son and his wife and their baby, but the two sons by her son's former wife, have tried to pull the proud grandparent from her stubborn stand in the matter. The circumstances related would certainly seem to show that not only have they not been able to budge her, but that she has scored distinctly.

It is no secret that Mrs. Ogden Goelet set her face against the marriage at the very beginning. She has never received her son since the announcement of the wedding. The bulk of the Goelet fortune came from Mrs. Ogden Goelet's father and her husband. While the son that she has cut out of her will has a fortune in his own right, left him by his father, the prospective loss of half or two-thirds of his mother's immense millions leaves him, in these peculiar times at least, an almost poor man in the eyes of New York society. But actually, while the disinheritance is a great financial loss it is not so serious to him and to his beautiful wife as the obstacle it has placed in the way they want to travel—a handicap practically impossible for them to overcome, since it serves definite notice

of Mrs. Ogden Goelet's attitude and provides the cue not only for those who are in sympathy with her, but for those who fear to risk her displeasure and the displeasure of those who stand by her.

Nor is it that the present Mrs. Goelet has not all the qualifications to shine in the society she craves. Indeed, she would put in the shade many of the women who are a part of it. She is beautiful, accomplished and gifted with a subtle feminine charm peculiar to the best women of the Latin races.

The struggle has been bitter. The bride began her life as Mrs. Goelet with practically no women friends of the kind she desired. But, naturally, there were a number of men who were under obligations to her husband, and when it was found that no responses came from the elect to the invitations sent out in his and his wife's name it is said that these men were called upon to fulfill their obligations. Nevertheless, very few of their wives left their cards at the Goelet mansion in Newport or at the big brick house on Fifth avenue, New York. The wives, who know their social game to the letter, rather offend Robert than go against his powerful and even more truculent mother.

This was in the height of the season when the opera was in full swing. As everyone knows, the appearance in just the right box at the opera is one of the best methods of placing one's self in the social world. There was the Goelet box, the first stage box on the uneven side of the diamond horseshoe, the most desirable box of that whole glorious circle.

Mrs. Ogden Goelet refused emphatically to let him have it, with the consequence

The Present Mrs. Robert Goelet, with the Son Whose Existence Has Never Been Acknowledged by His Grandmother and Who, According to London Reports, Has Been Left Out of Her Will.

that the pathway of the opera was barred to the pair; for, oddly enough, no other boxes became available, and it was manifestly out of the question for the Robert Goelets to sit down in the pit.

Another plan was decided upon. There was a beautiful country estate near Goshen, N. Y., and only a short motor ride from Tuxedo. Mr. Goelet had bought this place and had developed it most beautifully in the last year of his marriage with his first wife, Elsie Whelen.

The Goelets decided to retire to this fairyland and play the country house gambit. This has been known to succeed when all else fails, especially so in these days of prohibition, when large and commodious cellars exert a powerful lure.

And so the bride and bridegroom closed their Fifth avenue mansion and betook themselves to their manor house. But no one from nearby Tuxedo motored over to call; they were left in splendid isolation. Men, of course, came; that goes without saying, for Mr. Goelet's men friends are many and faithful. But the women did not; Mrs. Ogden Goelet's influence was too potent, and in America, unlike France and England, it is the women who make and rule society.

Goelet, motoring over to Tuxedo, offered to donate his estate for a large benefit the women of the exclusive colony were organizing; offered to finance the coming Horse Show; offered, in fact, the half of his for-

tune if only certain influential women would include the former Princess Riabouchinsky in their ranks!

But nothing happened.

In the luxurious home, showered with everything her husband's wealth could buy, Mrs. Goelet had nothing on earth to do but mourn over her tragic position and hold converse with her husband.

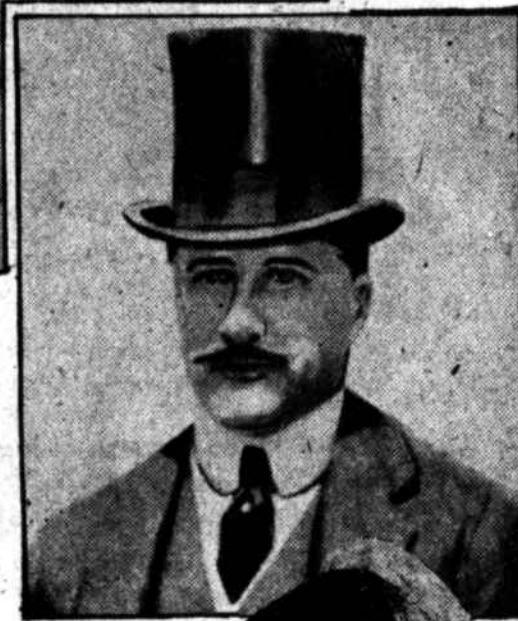
Then, about the first of July, Mr. Goelet made another move. There was Ochre Court, the wonderful chateau on Newport's cliffs, closed because his mother refused to live in the country. Why not try to rent it for the season and so prove to Newport that, after all, Mrs. Goelet was not so angry as she seemed? At the worst, his mother's business sense might lead her to turn an honest penny. So he cabled to England, where Mrs. Goelet was staying with the Duchess of Roxburghe, but the reply, it is said, singled the very cables!

This ended the attempts to win recognition at that time. Gathering together a few kindred spirits—male—he went off to Canada on a fishing trip, and, incidentally, spent most of the Summer up in the wilds.

Then another factor of seeming strength entered upon the side of the Robert Goelets. There were the two Goelet boys, sons of Elsie Whelen, the first wife. The divorce gave them to the equal custody of their parents, but Mrs. Clews, living with her artist husband in France, willingly let them spend most of their time in this country.



The First Mrs. Robert Goelet (now Mrs. Henry Clews, Jr.) with One of the Two Sons Who Will Inherit the Bulk of Their Grandmother's Many Millions.



Mr. Robert Goelet



Mr. Robert Goelet and His Sister, the Powerful Duchess of Roxburghe, With Whom Their Mother Will Spend the Balance of Her Life in England.

Their grandmother was devoted to them and they lived ostensibly with her when she was still in America. But even after their father's second marriage the two boys practically dwelt with him.

And they unforgottenly liked their new mother. She was just as good to them as she could be, and as unforgottenly loved them. She made the two youngsters riotously happy and deluged them with gifts and lavished affection upon them. They wrote to their grandmother how jolly their stepmother was and how much they liked her.

But the former Princess realized that while to be stepmother to the two Goelet heirs had its deep value, to be the mother of either an heir or an heiress would be still more important. In December a son was born to the Goelets. One would have thought a baby was something no grandmother's heart could resist. But no congratulations came from her, nor from any of the family in America. The deadlock still held.

And now it appears that the existence of this Goelet child has never been recognized by Grandmother Goelet in her will.

Nevertheless, the birth of this child brings about a curious complication. No matter what his father's family may feel, he is a Goelet, and certainly should strengthen his mother's hands in many ways. He will inherit a share of his father's wealth with his two half-brothers—and he will probably get the bulk of it. But, even so, they each will have double, perhaps three times, his fortune. Twenty years from now society will have a pretty problem on its hands in deciding just what difference it must make in its treatment of the three Goelet boys.

It may be that, inheriting the brilliancy of his mother and the sound business acumen of his grandfather, he will become a

colossal figure fully able to punish those who still remain of the women who snubbed his mother, or their children.

What feuds of the future, what changes in business and the world of finance may blossom from this budding social vendetta of to-day, who can tell? It is not probable that at the time he is old enough to wield power his grandmother will still be alive, but half his blood is of a race that does not forget wrongs and the members of which are long and consistent haters.